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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this anthology is to provide a sampling of insights related to racially and culturally different experiences, with an emphasis on the Asian American experience. The anthology focuses on the experiences of minority children as portrayed by both children and adults. Impressions written by five Asian American children in Grades 7 through 9, along with fifteen poems, and three short stories form the major part of the anthology. (Author/EC)

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AN ETHNIC ANTHOLOGY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Conceptually the Ethnic Anthology focuses on the experiences of minority children as portrayed by children and adults. The mixture of young and old provides some interesting contrasts.

The main purpose of this anthology is to provide a sampling of insights related to the racially/culturally different experience with an emphasis on the Asian American experience.

We are grateful to the various contributors who are sharing their unique talents.

Hopefully, the poems and stories will be helpful to teachers and administrators in their dealings with all students.

Lawrence Matsuda
Asian American Program
Administrator
Equal Educational Opportunities

Warren H. Burton
Director
Equal Educational Opportunities

LM:cm

CONTENTS

ASIAN IMMIGRANT IMPRESSIONS

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 1

MY FUTURE LIFE - 2

MY FAMILY- 3

THE STRUGGLE OF THE BLACK PEOPLE - - - - - - - - - - - - - 4

POETRY

ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL - 5

JACK-A-JUMPING - 6

THE ARROW AND THE SONG - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 7

A QUESTION - 8

JUSTIFICATION- 9

SOUTHERN SUN - 10

EMILY- 12

UNTITLED - 13

TO A NAVAHO WEAVER - 14

HOUSEHOLD SAFARI - 17

CITY RAIN- 20

ONCE BEING YOUNG - 21

THE BECHAMEL CAMEL - 22

PEOPLE - 24

AMERIKA- 24

SHORT STORIES

I HAVE A TALENT- 25

UNTITLED - 28

A SINGLE DAY - 35

ASIAN IMMIGRANT

IMPRESSIONS

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

RIC SORIA
PHILIPPINES
GRADE 9

I KNOW I AM A STRANGER IN THIS FAR AWAY LAND. I CAME FROM ASIA. I CAME FROM THE PHILIPPINES.

WHEN I FIRST CAME HERE, I DID NOT KNOW HOW TO SPEAK ENGLISH. I HAD NO FRIENDS. WHEN EVER I LOOKED AROUND THERE WERE MANY STRANGE THINGS AND PEOPLE. EVERYTIME I WENT OUT, I FELT COLD. I FELT THAT I DID NOT WANT TO GO OUT ANYMORE. I FELT LIKE I WANTED TO GO BACK TO THE PHILIPPINES BECAUSE THE CLIMATE IS WARMER.

WHEN I FIRST WENT TO SCHOOL, I WAS SCARED. I FELT LIKE I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO DID NOT KNOW HOW TO SPEAK ENGLISH. I FELT LIKE I WANTED TO GO BACK TO THE PHILIPPINES, BECAUSE I HAVE MANY FRIENDS THERE. HOWEVER, AFTER SEVERAL DAYS I MET SOME FILIPINOS ONE AFTER THE OTHER UNTIL I MET THEM ALL. I MET SOME OF THE TEACHERS AND I BEGAN TO STUDY AT EASE. I HAVE LEARNT HOW TO SPEAK ENGLISH IN THIS FAR AWAY LAND.

I LIKE MANY THINGS IN THE PHILIPPINES, AND I DO NOT LIKE MANY THINGS HERE. I DO NOT LIKE THE COLD WINTER HERE, NOR DO I LIKE THE HOT SUMMER IN THE PHILIPPINES.

I MET THE FIRST GIRL WHOM I LIKE AND WANTED TO GO OUT WITH HER. I LIKE HER BECAUSE SHE IS PRETTY AND NICE. SHE IS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER GIRLS. I MET HER IN THIS STRANGE FAR AWAY LAND LAST DECEMBER.

I DIDN'T SEE HER FOR A FEW MONTHS. SUDDENLY SHE CAME BACK AND TOLD ME THAT SHE HAD TRANSFERRED TO ANOTHER SCHOOL. FROM THAT TIME ON I NEVER SAW HER AGAIN AND I LEARNED TO FORGET HER.

MY FUTURE LIFE

JOANNE CHAN
HONG KONG
GRADE 8

BEFORE I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT MY FUTURE BECAUSE IT WAS HARD FOR ME TO IMAGINE WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO BE IN THE FUTURE. I WON'T LIKE TO BE A LAWYER, A DOCTOR, OR A NURSE IT TAKES TOO LONG TO GET THE DEGREE.

NOW I STILL HAVE FOUR YEARS TO GET THROUGH MY HIGH SCHOOL; AFTER THIS I WILL GO TO COLLEGE AND STUDY FOR THREE OR FOUR MORE YEARS. THEN, I'LL BE EIGHT YEARS OLDER THAN I AM NOW. I HAD BETTER GET MARRIED AS SOON AS I GET OUT FROM COLLEGE. DURING THAT TIME, I WOULD LIKE TO BE EITHER A CLERK OR A SECRETARY WHO WORKS IN THE BANK OR POST OFFICE. OF COURSE I WILL BE HOUSEWIFE WITH CHILDREN OF MY OWN, BUT THEY MUST LEARN HOW TO EAT CANNED FOOD EVERYDAY AND STILL LIKE THEM.

MY HUSBAND WILL BE THE ONE WHO DOES THE MOST WORK IN THE FAMILY. HE'LL BRING THE CHILDREN TO SCHOOL AND PICK THEM UP AFTER SCHOOL EVERYDAY. IN THE EVENING, HE SHOULD HELP ME COOK DINNER, BUT I WILL OPEN THE CANNED FOODS. AFTER DINNER, HE SHOULD WASH DISHES WHILE I PLAY WITH THE CHILDREN. HE'LL GO SHOPPING WITH ME BY BICYCLE AT LEAST TWICE A WEEK. WE WOULD LIKE TO BUY A HOUSE WITH EVERYTHING IN IT. THERE WILL BE A SWIMMING POOL IN THE FRONT YARD, A FOOTBALL FIELD IN THE BACK YARD. INSIDE THE BASEMENT, IT WILL HAVE A LARGE PLAYGROUND FOR PLAYING SOCCER, BASKETBALL, VOLLEYBALL AND TENNIS. I WILL PLANT SOME COTTON IN THE KITCHEN AND GROW A COCONUT TREE IN MY BEDROOM. THAT WILL BE A WONDERFUL TRY, I THINK. A LIBRARY WILL BE INSIDE THE BATHROOM. IF NECESSARY, A CIRCUS SHOULD BE IN OUR LIVING ROOM. I WILL SPEND ALL MY TIME ON MY FAMILY IF THIS WISH WILL COME TRUE.

I BELIEVE IT HAS JUST 0.1% CHANCE TO MAKE MY FUTURE COME TRUE. HOW BEAUTIFUL!

MY FAMILY

OI LAN LUIS
HONG KONG
GRADE 8

TO BE RICH OR TO BE POOR SEEMS TO BE A HARD CHOICE. MOST PEOPLE WOULD PREFER RICH. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE A LOT OF HARDSHIP BEING LIVING IN A POOR FAMILY, BUT IT CONTAINS A LOT OF THINGS RICH PEOPLE CANNOT BUY -- LOVE AND HAPPINESS. I HAVE EXPERIENCED ALL ABOUT THESE HARDSHIPS OF POOR PEOPLE. I WAS RAISED IN A POOR FAMILY.

WHEN I WAS SIX YEARS OLD, MY FATHER HAD MOVED TO VANCOUVER, CANADA. IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT WE WERE GOING TO BE RICH JUST BECAUSE HE WENT TO VANCOUVER. HE COULD NOT REMIT MONEY TO ANOTHER COUNTRY.

SO, MY TWO OLDER BROTHERS HAD TO STOP SCHOOLING AT FIFTH GRADE AND STARTED TO SUPPORT OUR FAMILY. MY SISTER, MY YOUNGER BROTHER AND I COULD CONTINUE TO STUDY. BUT IT SEEMS LIKE MONEY ALWAYS PLAY GAMES WITH US, POOR PEOPLE. FOR EXAMPLE WHEN I WAS ELEVEN, I DISCOVERED I HAD TUBERCULOSIS, MY MOTHER TOOK ME TO SEE THE DOCTOR, HE TOLD US THAT I WAS LUCKY THAT I HAD THE DISEASE NOW INSTEAD OF TWO YEARS AGO BECAUSE THE DISEASE WAS INCURABLE AT THAT TIME. I WAS NOT EXACTLY THRILLED, BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH IT WAS CURABLE, IT WOULD COST AT LEAST A FEW THOUSAND DOLLARS. HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET A FEW THOUSAND DOLLARS? BUT MY MOTHER LOVES ME VERY MUCH, SHE WORKED VERY HARD TO EARN MONEY TO CURE ME. LATER, I WAS BETTER BUT I STILL HAD TO GO TO THE DOCTOR EVERYDAY TO GET SHOTS. MAY BE THAT IS WHY I AM NOT AFRAID OF GETTING SHOTS NOW.

MY MOTHER WORKED VERY HARD FOR THE MONEY SHE EARNED, AND ON PAY DAY, WE COULD ALL FEEL THE VALUE OF THE MONEY SHE EARNED. PAY DAY IS A HAPPY DAY FOR POOR PEOPLE BECAUSE MONEY IS WHAT THEY REALLY NEED.

THANK GOD, MY DISEASE WAS CURED, MY FATHER COULD SEND US MONEY AFTER I WAS CURED. MY MOTHER ALSO FOUND A VERY GOOD JOB. SHE BOUGHT US A TELEVISION SET AND MY AUNT GAVE US A REFRIGERATOR. HOW WONDERFUL IT WAS, WE DON'T HAVE TO GO TO FRIENDS TO WATCH TELEVISION. EVERY SUNDAY, MOTHER TAKES US OUT TO HAVE THE CHINESE PASTRIES. BEFORE, WE CANNOT AFFORD TO GO OUT TO EAT EVEN THOUGH IT IS NOT EXPENSIVE.

WE ALL LOVE EACH OTHER DEARLY IN THE FAMILY EVEN THOUGH WE NEVER SAY IT OUT LOUD. EVERY NIGHT WE EAT DINNER TOGETHER, WATCH TELEVISION TOGETHER. ALL THIS GIVE US INDESCRIBEABLE JOY.

MY FATHER LIVED IN VANCOUVER FOR 5 YEARS AND HE MOVED TO SEATTLE. TWO YEARS AGO, WE ALL CAME HERE SINCE MY FATHER HAD ENOUGH MONEY TO SUPPORT US. SEATTLE IS A NEW PLACE TO ME, AND I CAN FEEL THE COLDNESS AROUND. PEOPLE ARE NOT WILLING TO HELP EACH OTHER. YOU MAY SAY I AM BEING CRITICAL, BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY CAN'T RICH PEOPLE DONATE MONEY TO POOR PEOPLE. EVERYBODY SHOULD HAVE LOVE INSIDE THEIR HEART. BUT IT HAS PROVED TO ME THAT ONLY POOR PEOPLE CAN LOVE.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE BLACK PEOPLE.....

ANNABELLE BUSUEGO AND MICHAEL LAU
PHILIPPINES AND HONG KONG
GRADE 7

MOST OF THE BLACK PEOPLE'S ANCESTOR IN AMERICA ARE FROM AFRICA. TRIBAL WARS IN AFRICA CAUSED THE LOSING TRIBES TO BECOME SLAVES. SOME OF THEM WERE SOLD TO ANOTHER COUNTRY LIKE SPAIN FOR EXAMPLE. ONLY THE RICH PEOPLE COULD AFFORD TO HAVE SLAVES AT THAT TIME. SOME OF THE SLAVES WERE SOLD AGAIN TO AMERICA. THE SLAVES DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH FOOD, CLOTHING OR SHELTER. THEY WORKED IN COTTON FIELDS AND IN OTHER AGRICULTURAL LABOR JOBS. SOME SLAVES COULDN'T STAND THE WAY THEIR MASTERS WERE TREATING THEM. THEY ESCAPED AND WENT TO PLACES WHERE NEW PEOPLE WERE TREATED EQUALLY. THEY COULD BE FREE MEN THERE.

IN SOME PLACES, BLACK PEOPLE STILL FACE DISCRIMINATION. BLACK PEOPLE HERE WORK FOR THEIR FREEDOM. EVEN THOUGH THE CONSTITUTION GUARANTEES "EQUAL RIGHTS FOR EQUAL PEOPLE," THE BLACKS DO NOT HAVE COMPLETE FREEDOM. FOR THEM, THE STRUGGLE OF FREEDOM IS STILL ALIVE.

POETRY

ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL

ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL
I MET TWO BOYS ALONG THE PATH.
ONE BOY STOPPED AND BLOCKED MY PATH
THE OTHER BOY STOPPED AND WATCHED.
I TURNED AROUND AND WENT HOME.

ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL
I MET TWO BOYS ALONG THE PATH.
ONE BOY STOPPED AND BLOCKED MY PATH
THE OTHER BOY STOPPED AND WATCHED.
I TURNED AROUND AND WENT HOME.

ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL
I MET A BOY ALONG THE PATH.
HE STOPPED AND BLOCKED MY PATH.
I TURNED AROUND AND WENT HOME.

ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL
I MET A BOY ALONG THE PATH.
HE STOPPED AND BLOCKED MY PATH.
I TURNED AROUND AND WENT HOME.

ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL

I MET NO ONE ALONG THE PATH.

I TURNED AROUND AND WENT HOME.

ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL

I MET NO ONE ALONG MY PATH.

I TURNED AROUND AND WENT HOME.

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JACK A-JUMPING

AT BREAKFAST TIME FOR JACK A-JUMPING

HIS MOTHER CALLS, "THERE'S PORRIDGE LUMPING!

AND COLD GREASED EGGS

WITH MOLDY BREAD

TO SET MY BOY A-STUMPING!"

WALTER MARTIN

THE ARROW AND THE SONG

I SHOT AN ARROW
INTO THE AIR
IT FELL TO EARTH
I KNEW NOT WHERE*
FOR SO SWIFTLY IT FLEW,
THE SIGHT COULD NOT
FOLLOW IN ITS FLIGHT.

I BREATHED A SONG
INTO THE AIR
IT FELL TO EARTH;
I KNEW NOT WHERE
FOR WHO HAS SIGHT
SO KEEN AND STRONG
THAT IT CAN FOLLOW
THE FLIGHT OF SONG.

LONG, LONG AFTERWARD
IN AN OAK
I FOUND THE ARROW
STILL UNBROKEN
AND THE SONG
FROM BEGINNING TO END
I FOUND AGAIN
IN THE HEART OF A FRIEND.

ROLANDO RODRIQUEZ
4TH GRADE
HAWTHORNE

*HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW
THE ARROW & THE SONG

A QUESTION

HEY, KOKOMO JOE,

MY SWARTHY BEAU,

HOW'S THE RASH ON YOUR TOE?

ALL GONE?...

HOPE SO.

MARYA CASTILLANO SCHARER

JUSTIFICATION

(A Discourse With Myself)

REMEMBER HOW YOU CRIED
WHEN YOUR CASTLES IN THE SAND
CAME TUMBLING DOWN

UNKINDLY
I SNICKERED, AND THOUGHT IT CUTE
TO HURT YOU.

YEARS LATERS, I ALSO FEEL LIKE CRYING,
BUT DO NOT CRY; EVEN THIS
I'M NOT ALLOWED TO DO.

HAD I ONLY KNOWN THE TORMENT/DISCONTENT
THAT SHATTERED CASTLES BRING.
I WOULD'VE NEVER TRIED TO CRUMBLE
PRETTY MINARETS, LABORIOUSLY BUILT.

TODAY, MY CASTLE IS ALSO BEING RAZED
BY MERCILESS BATTERING RAM.
DOWN GOES THE PALACE, HAREM & KING;
GONE IS THE PRINCESS...

GONE EVERYTHING.

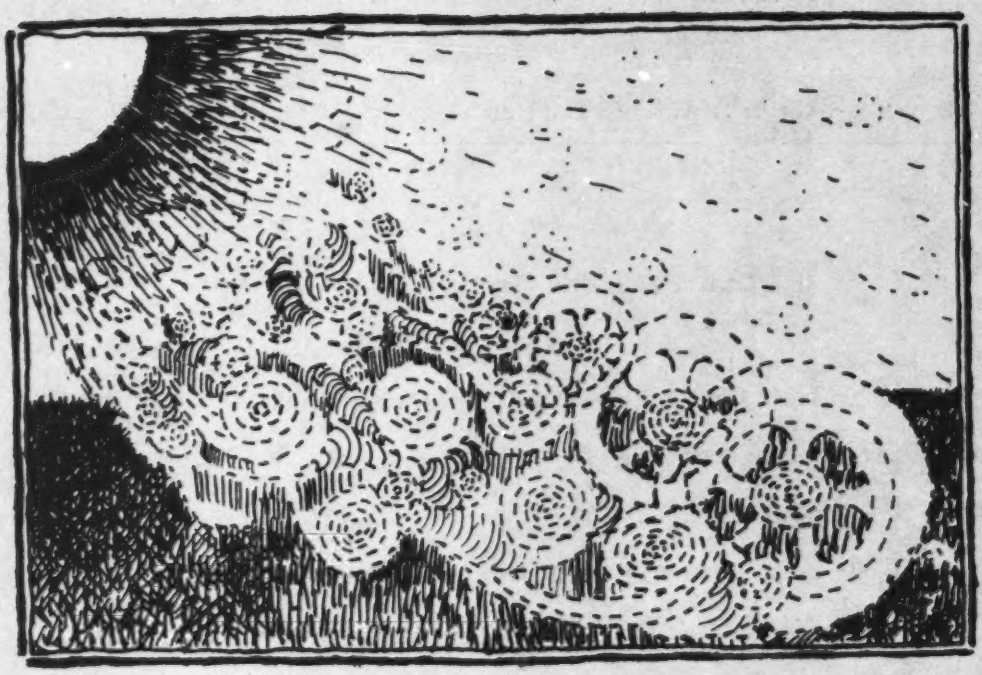
RAULRSALINAS
6:63

SOUTHERN SUN

SUN STREAMING DOWN
MAKES A FINE SPIT SHINE.
BUFFED WITH A SIX PACK
AND WATERMELON RIND.

SCARING SHADOWS AWAY
IN THE HEAT OF DAY.
CLICKING IT'S HEELS,
TURNING INTO WHEELS,
AND ROLLING AWAY.

MONA LISA SALOY



18

EMILY

ONE YEAR, LONG AGO,
WHEN KIDS WORE YELLOW RUBBER RAINCOATS
AND RED BOOTS TO SCHOOL,
GRANDMA TOOK US TO THE BEEHIVE TO
BUY SCHOOL CLOTHES,
WE SAT ON THE COUNTER FOR AN HOUR
LOOKING AND TOUCHING ALL THE NEW THINGS,
I GOT A COAT AND SOME PURPLE AND GREEN
LOLLIPOP UNDERWEAR, BUT
RALPH MADE FUN OF ME,
WHEN IT WAS SWINGING ON THE ROPE
HUNG ON THE OLD OAK TREE BY THE RIVER,
HE TOLD EVERYONE THAT I WAS WEARING
PURPLE UNDERWEAR
I WAS SAD AND HURT, AND WANTED TO
RUN AWAY,
HURRIEDLY I STARTED HOME CRYING
AND FELL INTO A MUD HOLE
ON THE WAY,
RUINING MY BRAND NEW COAT.
BUT GRANDMA UNDERSTOOD AND
GENTLY SHE GAVE ME A TOWEL TO
CLEAN MY FACE AND
WIPE THE TEARS AWAY.

LARRY MATSUDA

(UNTITLED)

I HAVE SEARCHED, IN HOPES OF FINDING
EXPERIENCES OF JIGSAW DREAMS
WITHIN THE REALITY OF BROKEN PROMISES.

I'VE HEARD, BUT NEVER SEEN
THE HEARTBEAT OF A LOVE
FESTERING IN A CANCEROUS HATE.

I WANT TO LIVE.
BUT BEFORE I DIE,
I'D LIKE TO SEE THE UNDYING MAJESTY
OF A WORLD, TRANQUIL WITH PEACE.

I HAVE LOOKED, AND ALWAYS MISSED
THE FORGOTTEN NOBILITY
THAT MAKE PEOPLE CRY WITH JOY.

I HAVE SEEN, BUT NEVER GRASPED
A HAPPINESS
GROWING AFTER DARK DESPAIR.

I BELIEVE,
AND NEVER DOUBT,
THAT THERE'S BEAUTY
YEARNING TO BE CAPTURED.

I WILL TRY, AND I WILL SUCCEED,
TO FIND THE SPARK
THAT MAKES OUR WORLD BURN BRIGHT WITH HOPE.

TIM CORDOVA

TO A NAVAHO WEAVER

WEAVE OLD WOMAN,
WITH THE EASE OF FINGERS
KNOTTED WITH AGE AND
MILES OF RAW WOOLS.
A SKEIN,
A SKEIN,
WOVEN TO MEAN A
SUMMON TO SPIRITS
OR SIMPLY TO DECORATE --
A GOOSETRACK, THUNDER'S MATE,
FOUR MOUNTAINS, OR CORNSTALKS;
CAPTURE A YEI FOR ME,
MAKE IT STAY FOR ME,
THAT I MIGHT STAND IN ITS SHADOW
AND KNOW A FACE THAT ISN'T MINE.
COLOR IT WITH BERRIES, HOT WATER
AND BITTERNESS,
CRUSH THE LEAVES TO FREE
THE GOLD OF AUTUMN'S GREED,
DISTILL THE SKY FOR THE NEED OF BLUE
AND GATHER THE DESERT FOR A CINNAMON HUE,
AND FOR RED,
TAKE MY HEART
THAT I MIGHT BE PART OF IT, TOO.

DIAGONAL WEFT AND BACK ON THE BATTEN,
JUST IN FRONT OF THE BATTEN,
BEAT THE PATTERN WITH THE
COMB OF COTTONWOOD,
BUBBLE THE BOUND END OF THE WEFT
WITH THE COMB.
A SPLICE, A HEDDLE STICK,
A SNITCH KNOT, A SLING KNOT,
TO INTERLOCK THE YARNS,
SHORN FROM A SHEEP WHO
WANDERS WITH CHILDREN,
SEEKING THE SHADE THAT WILL RARELY COME.
AND DID YOU REMEMBER TO OFFER THE STONE,
THE FEATHER AND POLLEN,
TO HONOR THE SPIDERS WHO TAUGHT US WEAVING?
IN OCTOBER THEY CAME, EIGHT-LEGGED
AND SHINING,
THEY COVERED THE GROUND BEFORE DESCENDING
TO THEIR SECRET HOMES OF COOLNESS.
LONG AGO THE CROSS POLES WERE FORMED
OF EARTH AND SKY CORDS,
WITH SUN RAYS MADE WARP STICKS,
WITH FOUR SACRED SPINDLES --
ABALONE, JADE, AND TURQUOISE FOR
THE THREE KINDS OF LIGHTNING,
WITH A WHORL OF WHITE SHELL
FOR THE RAIN.

WEAVE OLD WOMAN,
WEAVE ME A RAIN CLOUD
IN TERRACED STEPS
OF DRY WOOL AND SILENCE.
WEAVE WITH BROWN FINGERS
AND WHITE WOOL...
AND SUN'S STILL YOUR BATTEN,
THE LIGHTNING YOUR SPINDLE.

TERRY TAFOYA

HOUSEHOLD SAFARI

I SIDLE THROUGH THE DOOR
LOOKING FOR THE LIGHT
TIN TRIANGLES ELBOW
MY NECK
A COAT COLLAR SLAPS MY LIPS
MY FOOT IS TRAPPED
IN A BOOT BOX
SHARP BUCKLES NIP MY ANKLE
I STILL HAVEN'T FOUND THE LIGHT
I CAN HEAR BREATHING
TWEEDS AGAINST KNITS
A FEW SUEDES
A FADED SILK
PERHAPS THE ONE I WORE
TO THAT SPRING PARTY
THE ONE I FORGOT TO MEND
I GULP AIR COUNTING TO TEN
AND TEN AGAIN
IN FRACTIONS
I L FT MY ARM
GROPE FOR THE LIGHT

EASING MY SHOULDER SOCKET

UPWARD AND SLIGHTLY FORWARD

FORCES MY HEAD TO TURN

IN CHAIN REACTION

AN ANGLE OF BLACK WIRE

FINGERS MY CHEEK

JANGLES AGAINST ITS NEIGHBOR

THEN CLANGS TO THE FLOOR

SHOULDER SEAMS SAG

ARMS SLIP

A BUTTON GAILY BOUNCES

BOUNCES AGAINST MY FEET

I LOOK DOWN

MISTAKE

A WOODEN HUMP

BARELY MISSES MY EYE

MY HEAD ROLLS BACK

RAPS AGAINST THE WALL

I THINK I'LL BE SICK

BUT I'VE FOUND THE LIGHT

A WOODEN HANGER

ROCKS HAUGHTILY BEFORE ME

BRAZENLY NAKED OF CLOTHES

THE LIGHT FLUTTERS

I PANIC, PLUNGE IN DEEPER

SMELL LAST YEAR'S SCENT
A FORGOTTEN DRESS
HOOKS ONTO MY GLASSES
A SUIT SLIPS TO THE FLOOR
SKIRTS AVALANCHING AFTER IT
I DIVE TO SAVE THEM
A SHELF TILTS
IT'S FULL OF HATS
THEY JOIN ME
AS I PLUNGE INTO THE DEPTHS
OF AN OLD WINTER COAT
SHOUTING
THIS IS MADNESS
THE LIGHT FLICKERS OFF.

COLLEEN J. MCELROY

CITY RAIN

RAIN SMELLS FRESH
LIKE SWEET BREATH.
IT'S NICE AND WET,
COOL LIKE SWEAT.

RAIN WASHES STREETS,
FEEDS THIRSTY PLANTS,
CLEANS THE AIR,
MAKES DIRTY PANTS.

WHEN IT'S BLOWING DAMP
TAKE SHELTER,
MAKE A CAMP.
RAIN BLOOMS A ROSE.
IT TICKLES YOUR NOSE.

WHEN THE SUN COMES
AND THE RAIN IS DONE,
STOMP YOUR FEET
WITH THE BEAT
OF THE TALKING FEET
ON THE CLEAN WET STREETS.

MONA LISA SALOY

'ONCE BEING YOUNG'

ONCE I WAS YOUNG,
YESTERDAY PERHAPS.
I WALKED THE
RIVERBANKS, ALONE.

I CAME UPON AN OLD FISHERMAN
TEACHING HIS YOUNG SON
THE ART OF BAITING A HOOK.

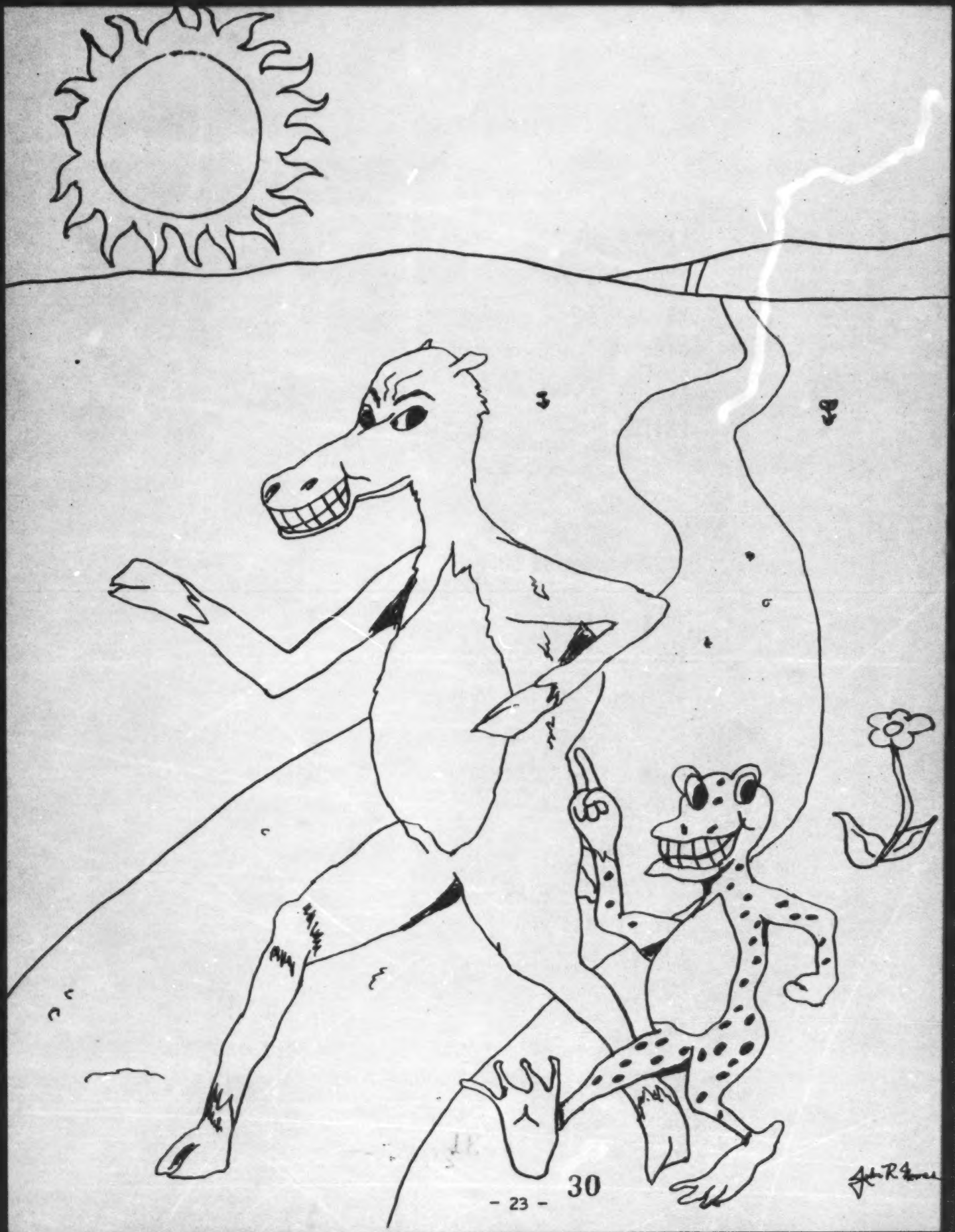
AND I WAS OVERCOME WITH ENVY

RAULR SALINAS
4-26-59

THE BECHAMEL CAMEL

THE BECHAMEL CAMEL AND THE TANGERINE TOAD
DECIDED THEY'D WALTZ THEIR WAY DOWN THE ROAD.
BUT THE CAMEL STEPPED IN
WHILE THE TOAD WAS IN SPIN,
AND MADE A MESS OF POOR TOAD!

WALTER MARTIN



30

PEOPLE

PEOPLE EVERYWHERE
PEOPLE ARE NOT PEOPLE.
THEY ARE SAVAGES WITH THEIR
PREJUDICES AND BLOODY WARS.
SINCE WE CALL US PEOPLE
LETS ACT LIKE A PEOPLE
UNITED.

AMERIKA

AMERIKA AMERIKA
YOU HAVE SLAUGHTERED MY PEOPLE
WITH YOUR MODERN WEAPONS.
YOU HAVE STARVED AND ENSLAVED THEM
WITH YOUR GREEDINESS.
WHY DO YOU DO THIS?
BUT NOW,
I HAVE NO CHOICE
BUT TO FIND YOU
GUILTY GUILTY
GUILTY!

ROBERTO GALLEGOS, JR.
AGE 12

SHORT

STORIES

I HAVE A TALENT

HI. MY NAME IS L-RIG, THE BROWN WOODEN PUPPET. I STAND 12 INCHES FROM THE FLOOR AND MY FAMILY TELLS ME THAT'S HOW TALL I'LL BE FOREVER, BECAUSE PUPPETS DON'T GROW; THEY'RE MADE. MY PARENTS ARE FAMOUS PUPPETS AND HAVE PERFORMED BEFORE AUDIENCES OF CHILDREN IN PLENTY OF STATES, AS I HOPE TO SOMEDAY. I THINK THAT I AM PRETTY SURE OF THAT NOW, ALTHOUGH I WASN'T ALWAYS SURE OF WHAT I WANTED TO DO.

MY FAMILY HAS ALWAYS BEEN SKILLED IN THEIR PERFORMANCES. I'VE SEEN YOB, HE'S MY BROTHER, FLIP CARTWHEEELS AROUND ME WITHOUT CROSSING HIS LINES WITH MINE. POP CAN EVEN ACT OUT TWO PARTS IN THE SAME PLAY WITHOUT TWISTING HIS ARMS WRONG. MOM IS THE REAL DANCER THOUGH, BECAUSE WHEN SHE MOVES, EVERY-ONE WATCHES. MOST OF THE OTHER PUPPETS PERFORM GOOD, EXCEPT ME. I FALL DOWN ALL THE TIME. I DON'T KNOW HOW IT STARTED EITHER. IF I AM WALKING ON STAGE OR DANCING, ALL OF A SUDDEN, I FALL DOWN. PLOP! JUST LIKE THAT! MY LINES GET TANGLED AND I BECOME A LARGE HEAP OF KNOTTED STRING AND STICKS. THEN HUMANS HAVE A HARD TIME TELLING WHERE I START OR STOP WITH ALL THE MESS I MAKE.

SURELY IT WAS AN ACCIDENT, I THOUGHT TO MYSELF AT FIRST. BUT IT KEPT HAPPENING ALL THE TIME. I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH OF A FALLING PROBLEM AT PUPPET SCHOOL BECAUSE THE TEACHER WOULD TALK OR DEMONSTRATE WHILE THE STUDENTS SAT, LISTENED, AND WATCHED. BUT ONCE I GOT UP TO TRY A STEP, I WOULD FALL DOWN AGAIN.

SINCE PUPPETS LIVE IN THEATRE HOUSES, WHEN WE TRAVEL, HOME COMES WITH US. I'VE NEVER BEEN HOMESICK; BUT I HAVE BEEN STUCK HOME. ON OUR LAST TRIP, MY POP STAPLED ME TO MY SEAT SO I WOULDN'T FALL. IT WAS A SMALL STAPLE, SO IT DIDN'T HURT MUCH. BUT I STILL THINK THAT WAS A HARD MEASURE FOR POP TO TAKE. I AM CLUMSY AND HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY PRO-BLEMS GETTING OTHER PUPPETS TO TESTIFY TO THAT.

ONCE, I WAS ON A TEAM OF MARCHING PUPPETS. THE DRILL LEADER ASKED ME TO LEAD THE FIRST ROW INTO PARADE FORMATION. INSTEAD OF LEADING THE PUPPETS FORWARD; I LED THEM ON TOP OF ME AND EACH OTHER. GOLL, DID I MESS THINGS UP. PARADE PRACTICE WAS CANCELED AND NO ONE WOULD SPEAK TO ME FOR DAYS. I FELT AWFUL AND FELL DOWN AGAIN AND AGAIN.

PRETTY SOON MY POP SAT ME DOWN FOR A TALK.

"L-RIG," HE SAID, "YOU'VE GOT TO STOP THIS FALLING DOWN. DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME? YOU'RE GONNA HURT YOURSELF REAL BAD L-RIG, AND YOU KNOW WE TAUGHT YOU BETTER THAN THAT. SO YOU CUT THAT MESS OUT AND BECOME A GRACEFUL PUPPET LIKE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO."

"YEAH POP," I ANSWERED WITHOUT HESITATION. "I'LL TRY, REALLY I WILL." WELL, AS SOON AS I STOOD UP FROM MY SEAT; I FELL DOWN AGAIN. POP WAS FURIOUS. HE JUMPED UP AND DOWN, RAISING HIS ARMS EVERY WHICH WAY.

"HOW COULD YOU BE SO CLUMSY L-RIG? YOU'VE BEEN TAUGHT EVERYTHING A GRACEFUL PUPPET NEEDS TO KNOW. L-RIG, FROM NOW ON ITS UP TO YOU TO MAKE SOMETHING OF YOURSELF."

"I KNOW THAT POP," I ANSWERED SOBBING. "BUT I JUST CAN'T HELP IT. I TRY TO BE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, BUT IT DOESN'T WORK."

"L-RIG!" MY POP SHOUTED FIRMLY WITH HIS IF-YOU-DON'T-DO-RIGHT-THIS-TIME-I'LL-SPANK-YOU-GOOD-LOOK, "STAND UP!" AS SOON AS I STOOD UP, I SLIPPED AND FELL DOWN, KNOCKING POP OFF BALANCE, WHICH CAUSED HIM TO FLIP, CATCH MY LINES, AND DIVE TOWARD MY LANKY LEGS. POP'S JOINTS ARE USUALLY LOOSE ANYWAY, SO HE CAN DANCE AND ACROBAT WITHOUT GETTING TANGLED UP. BECAUSE HE WAS THROWN OFF BALANCE, HIS LOOSE JOINTS CAUGHT HIS STRING LINES AND MINE. GOODNESS! POP WAS A MESS AND ANGRY; I WAS A MESS AND SCARED; AND THE PUPPET MASTER WAS FURIOUS. IT'S HARD TO REMEMBER WHO SCREAMED THE LOUDEST, POP OR THE PUPPET MASTER.

"WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU STICKS DOIN' DOWN THERE ANYWAY? DO YA THINK YOU'RE HUMAN OR SOMETHIN'? IF YA WEREN'T STAR PUPPETS, I'D MAKE THE WHOLE HEAP OF YA STAR TOOTHPICKS! NOW, UNTANGLE THAT MESS! Y'ALL HEAR ME? UNTANGLE IT I SAID!"

"YEAH BOSS, RIGHT AWAY BOSS." POP SAID QUICKLY. POP TRIED TO GET UP, BUT HIS JOINTS WERE TOO WRAPPED UP IN STRING. "DAG-BURN-IT L-RIG! I'M GONNA WOLLOP YOUR STICK ENDS 'TIL YOU'RE SORE IF I LIVE THROUGH THIS ORDEAL, SO HELP ME."

WOW, WAS I SCARED. THE NOISE AND THE MESS WAS TOO MUCH. IF I MOVED THE WRONG WAY, WE MIGHT EVEN GET MORE TANGLED THAN WE WERE BEFORE NOW. THEN I SAID TO MYSELF, L-RIG YOU'RE A STUPID LUMP OF STICKS. WHY, I CAN'T EVEN STAND UP WITHOUT FALLING DOWN. I'VE EMBARRASSED MYSELF IN FRONT OF MY FRIENDS AND SCHOOLMATES. WHAT'S WORSE, I'VE SHAMED POP IN FRONT OF THE PUPPET MASTER. MAYBE I SHOULD LET THE PUPPET MASTER MAKE ME INTO TOOTHPICKS. OH NO, THEN POP WOULD HAVE TO GO TOO. SO I CLOSED MY EYES REAL TIGHT, JUST FOR A MINUTE. WHEN I OPENED THEM, I COULD SEE A BIG HOLE IN

THE MASS OF STRING. IT LOOKED LIKE A BIG TUNNEL. I REACHED FOR THE TOP STICK, WHICH WAS MY FATHER'S LEG. I LOOPED THE LEG THROUGH THE STRING OVER AND OVER 'TIL THE LEG WAS FREE AND CONNECTED AGAIN. DAD STOPPED FUSSING AND LET ME FREE HIS LEFT ARM, THEN HIS OTHER LEG, HIS NECK, AND ME. FINALLY, WE WERE BOTH FREE AND CHECKING TO SEE THAT EVERY STICK WAS IN PLACE. I COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT I WAS DOING SOMETHING RIGHT FOR A CHANGE. THEN THE PUPPET MASTER SPOKE.

"WELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME Y'ALL CLEAN UP. SAY LITTLE PUPPET MAN, THAT KID O' YOURS IS PRETTY SWIFT. I MIGHT USE Y'ALL TO TRAIN THE NEW ACROBATS TO UNTANGLE THEMSELVES. WE COULD START A NEW SCHOOL. I'LL GIVE IT A TURN IN MA HEAD FIRST."

"L-RIG, DID YOU HEAR THAT?" POP WAS GETTING EXCITED THEN.

"YEAH POP," I WAS STILL NERVOUS FROM MAKING POP SO UPSET. HE'S NOT AS YOUNG AS HE USED TO BE.

"L-RIG," POP SAID, "I NEVER THOUGHT THIS DAY WOULD COME SO SOON. I ALWAYS KNEW YOU HAD IT IN YOU AND YOU JUST PROVED IT."

POP WAS SMILING REAL BIG CAUSE HE WAS PROUD OF ME. CAN YOU IMAGINE, PROUD OF ME.

MONA LISA SALOY

(UNTITLED)

JINNY WAS TWELVE-YEARS OLD AND A CHOCTAW INDIAN. SHE REMEMBERED WHEN SHE WAS VERY LITTLE, SHE IDENTIFIED HERSELF AS "HALF-INDIAN" AND HALF-AMERICAN." HER FATHER HAD LAUGHED, AND THEN TALKED WITH HER FOR A LONG TIME.

"YOUR GRANDMA AND GRANDPA MARTIN BECAME AMERICAN CITIZENS IN 1924, WHEN CONGRESS GAVE ALL INDIANS CITIZENSHIP. YOUR MOM'S FOLKS, GRANDMA AND GRANDPA VAN BROCKLIN, BECAME CITIZENS EIGHT YEARS LATER, IN 1932. YOU'RE HALF CHOCTAW AND HALF DUTCH, BUT YOU'RE ALL AMERICAN."

TODAY, SHE WAS JUST CONCERNED WITH BEING JINNY, BEST FRIEND OF CINDY, WHO HAD BLONDE HAIR LIKE JINNY'S MOM. BUT CINDY'S EYES WERE GREY, AND JINNY'S MOM HAD EYES LIKE THE TURQUOISE RING ON HER LITTLE FINGER. JINNY HAD BROWN EYES THAT PEEKED OUT FROM BEHIND SILVER-RIMMED GLASSES.

"READY, HONEY?" MRS. MARTIN CALLED FROM THE LIVING ROOM WHERE JINNY HEARD THE METAL SOUND OF THE CAR KEYS BEING TAKEN RECOVERED FROM THE ORANGE CERAMIC POT WHERE THEY WERE PLACED EVERY EVENING.

"COMING," SHE CALLED, RUNNING HER BLACK COMB THROUGH HER BROWN HAIR. SHE NOTICED HER EYES AND HER HAIR WERE EXACTLY THE SAME COLOR. SHE PICKED UP HER PURSE THAT LOOKED LIKE IT WAS MADE OUT OF BLUE JEANS (IT WASN'T) AND FOLLOWED HER MOM OUT THE DOOR.

MRS. MARTIN DROVE THREE BLOCKS AND THEN ASKED JINNY TO RUN IN AND GET CINDY FROM HER HOUSE. CINDY SAW THEM FROM THE PICTURE WINDOW, HOLDING BACK THE GREEN CURTAINS WITH HER LEFT HAND. SHE LET GO OF THE CURTAINS, GRABBED HER THINGS AND RAN OUT BEFORE JINNY HAD THE CAR DOOR OPEN.

"WHERE'RE WE GOING?" ASKED CINDY, "LET ME SHOW YOU..." SHE LIFTED UP HER WRIST TO JINNY, AND JINNY THOUGHT OF A BLUE FLOWER SHE ONCE SMELLED AT A FLORIST SHOP.

"NEAT," SAID JINNY WHO THEN LET CINDY SMELL HER WRIST, WHICH REMINDED CINDY OF STRAWBERRIES...BUT JINNY'S HAIR ALWAYS SMELLED LIKE STRAWBERRIES.

"WE'RE GOING TO A NEW STORE IN THE MALL, CINDY," SAID MRS. MARTIN. "THEY'RE HAVING A GOOD SALE. WE'LL HAVE LUNCH, AND THEN I'LL LET YOU TWO FIND WHAT YOU WANT FOR CINDY'S GRANDMOTHER ON

YOUR OWN. I'LL MEET YOU IN THE GARDEN DEPARTMENT AT THREE, AND WE'LL GET THE PESTICIDE FOR THE TOMATOES. THAT WILL GIVE YOU AN HOUR TO GET READY FOR THE PARTY."

"GRANDMA WILL BE 70," SAID CINDY, "THAT'S REALLY OLD."

"HOW OLD IS MY GRANDMA?" JINNY ASKED HER MOM.

"I BELIEVE SHE'S 72," SAID MRS. MARTIN.

"WHERE IS SHE?" ASKED CINDY.

"SHE'S IN MISSISSIPPI."

"WHAT ABOUT YOUR OTHER GRANDMA?" ASKED CINDY, "MY OTHER GRANDMA IS IN CALIFORNIA."

"MY OTHER GRANDMA IS DEAD. I ONLY GOT TO MEET HER ONE TIME WHEN I WAS LITTLE. SHE TALKED FUNNY."

"SHE HAD A DUTCH ACCENT, DEAR," SAID MRS. MARTIN, "JUST LIKE YOUR GRANDFATHER." MRS. MARTIN PULLED EASILY INTO THE SHOPPING MALL'S PARKING LOT, TAKING NOTE OF THE SECTION WHERE THEY LEFT THE CAR. "IT'S NORTH K. REMEMBER THAT KIDS, I ALWAYS FORGET."

JINNY RAN AHEAD, HOLDING THE GLASS DOOR OF THE COFFEE SHOP OPEN SO THE LITTLE BELLS ON THE DOOR JINGLED LIKE CHRISTMAS. THEY SAT DOWN TOGETHER AND LOOKED AT THE MENU. JINNY DECIDED ON A CHICKEN SALAD SANDWICH.

"HAVE YOU DECIDED YET?" ASKED THE WAITRESS, PUTTING DOWN WATER GLASSES IN FRONT OF THEM. SHE LOOKED AT MRS. MARTIN AND THEN AT CINDY. "YOU HAVE A BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER, " SHE SAID, LOOKING DIRECTLY AT CINDY. "AND WHO'S THIS LITTLE GIRL?" SHE SMILED LOOKING AT JINNY.

"MY BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER," SAID MRS. MARTIN SHARPLY, "AND I WANT A DIET SPECIAL."

AFTER LUNCH, MRS. MARTIN DISAPPEARED INTO THE DRESS SECTION WHILE JINNY AND CINDY DRIFTED NEAR THE RECORD ALBUMS. "WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR GRANDMA WANTS FOR HER BIRTHDAY?" ASKED JINNY, FLIPPING THROUGH THE LARGE POSTERS OF ROCK STARS.

"I DON'T KNOW," CINDY ANSWERED, AND LOOKED UP FROM THE DISPLAY OF THE TOP TWENTY CURRENT HITS. "SHE ALWAYS GETS BATH POWDER, AND STATIONERY, AND LACE HANKIES AND STUFF." SHE PICKED UP NUMBER 11 IN THE DISPLAY, AND THEN PUT IT BACK. "WHAT DO YOU GIVE YOUR GRANDMA?"

"WHEN WE GO BACK IN THE SUMMER," SAID JINNY, "WE BRING HER DRESSES AND A CARTON OF CIGARETTES, AND CHILI PEPPERS."

"CHILI PEPPERS?"

"SHE TAUGHT FOR A WHILE IN THE SOUTHWEST, AND GOT USED TO EATING THEM ON HER EGGS FOR BREAKFAST."

"I DON'T THINK MY GRANDMA WILL GO FOR CHILI PEPPERS."

"WANT TO LOOK AT LACE HANKIES?"

"I THINK," SAID CINDY, "I WANT TO BUY HER A CHINESE DOLL. COME OVER HERE AND I'LL SHOW IT TO YOU."

JINNY FOLLOWED, AND CINDY TOOK HER TO WHERE THERE WERE TWELVE DOLLS INSIDE GLASS BOXES WITH GOLD-COLORED SIDES.

"THEY'RE JAPANESE," SAID JINNY, "NOT CHINESE." SHE STARED SILENTLY, FASCINATED BY THE BRIGHT COLORS OF THE DOLLS' CLOTHING. HER FAVORITE WAS THE SAME SHADE OF THE IRIS PLANT THAT BLOOMED IN FRONT OF THE YARD. THE DOLL'S HAIR WAS AS BLACK AS HER FATHER'S, BUT IT'S FACE WAS VERY VERY WHITE, WITH TINY LIPS THE COLOR OF HER MOM'S FINGERNAILS. "BEAUTIFUL," WHISPERED JINNY.

CINDY LIKED THE ONE IN PINK, AND LIFTED IT GENTLY FROM THE REST OF THE BOXES.

"I'M SURE YOUR GRANDMOTHER WILL LIKE IT."

"I AM TOO. SHE JUST SITS AROUND A LOT THERE, YOU KNOW. SHE CAN LOOK AT IT ALL THE TIME."

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN SHE JUST SITS AROUND?"

"HAVEN'T YOU EVER BEEN TO A NURSING HOME?" ASKED CINDY, FROWNING.

"NO."

"THAT'S WHERE EVERYONE GOES WHEN THEY GET TOO OLD. THEN YOU GET TO VISIT THEM EVERY WEEK, ALTHOUGH SOMETIMES WE ONLY HAVE TIME TO GO THERE EVERY OTHER WEEK."

"THAT SOUNDS LIKE PRISON...DON'T THEY EVER GET TO GO HOME?"

"SHE COMES HOME DURING CHRISTMAS, BUT MOM GETS REALLY NERVOUS WHEN GRANDMA COMES HOME. GRANDMA ALWAYS WANTS TO DO STUFF, LIKE COOK AND WASH DISHES, BUT MOM TELLS HER THAT SHE WORKED HARD ALL HER LIFE AND THIS IS HER CHANCE TO REST. ACTUALLY," SAID CINDY, RUNNING HER FINGER UP AND DOWN THE GOLD RIM OF THE DOLL'S BOX, "MOM DOESN'T LET HER WASH DISHES 'CAUSE SHE CAN'T SEE GOOD AND DOESN'T GET ALL THE FOOD OFF THE PLATES." CINDY PUT THE PINK DOLL ON THE COUNTER, AND THE CASHIER CAME OVER.

"SUCH A PRETTY DOLL," THE WOMAN SAID, "IT LOOKS JUST LIKE YOUR LITTLE FRIEND."

CINDY LOOKED AT JINNY. "I DON'T THINK SO."

"AREN'T YOU PART JAPANESE?" THE WOMAN ASKED JINNY.

"NO," SAID JINNY QUIETLY, "I'M AN AMERICAN."

"SHE'S AN INDIAN," SAID CINDY, "... AND I WANT TO BUY THE DOLL."

CINDY HELD THE PACKAGE CONTAINING HER GIFT TIGHTLY IN HER LEFT HAND AND WATCHED JINNY REJECT ALL THE LACE HANKIES THE STORE OFFERED.

"I DON'T THINK YOU LOOK JAPANESE," SHE SAID.

"YOU'RE SOME JUDGE. YOU THOUGHT THE DOLL WAS CHINESE."

"WHAT WILL YOU GET HER?"

"DOES SHE HAVE A HOBBY?"

"NO, SHE JUST MOSTLY SITS."

"WHY?"

"THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GET OLD. YOU JUST KINDA SIT. DOESN'T YOUR GRANDMA? WHICH NURSING HOME IS SHE IN?"

"SHE ISN'T IN A NURSING HOME. SHE'S ON THE TRIBAL COUNCIL, AND TEACHES CHOCTAW IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL."

"WHAT'S A TRIBAL COUNCIL?"

"IT'S SORT OF LIKE...SORT OF LIKE THE PEOPLE WHO DECIDE WHAT THE TRIBE WILL DO -- WHAT SORT OF CONTRACTS THEY SIGN, PASSING RULES, THAT SORT OF STUFF."

"AND YOUR GRANDMA'S STILL DOING THAT? DIDN'T SHE RETIRE?"

"OH, SHE RETIRED FROM HER REGULAR TEACHING JOB, BUT SHE STILL WORKS AS A SPECIAL TEACHER FOR THE LANGUAGE CLASSES."

"DON'T THEY HAVE NURSING HOMES IN MISSISSIPPI?"

"I DON'T KNOW. I NEVER NOTICED. GRANDMA LIVES WITH MY AUNT KATE AND UNCLE DICK. WHAT SHE SAYS, YOU DO, OR ELSE."

"OR ELSE WHAT?"

"I DON'T KNOW. WE JUST ALWAYS DID WHAT SHE SAID. AUNT KATE HAS FOUR KIDS, AND THEY ALL REALLY OBEY GRANDMA. WHEN SHE SAYS WE'RE TOO NOISY, THE SOUND FALLS OFF LIKE THEN THE TEACHER WALKS BACK IN THE CLASSROOM...BUT SHE DOESN'T SAY WE'RE TOO NOISY VERY OFTEN."

"DOES SHE WASH THE DISHES?"

"ARE YOU KIDDING? THE FOUR KIDS AND I DO THEM WHEN I'M BACK THERE." JINNY STOPPED TALKING, " -- IT'S ALMOST THREE, WE BETTER GET OVER TO THE GARDEN DEPARTMENT. MOM WILL BE THERE... AND I'VE DECIDED," SHE SMILED, "TO BUY YOUR GRANDMA A PLANT." SHE CHOSE A PLANT WITH BIG RED FLOWERS THAT LOOKED LIKE THEY WERE MADE OF VELVET, AND HAD DARK GREEN LEAVES.

"I THINK SHE'LL LIKE THAT," SAID MRS. MARTIN, PAYING FOR PESTICIDE.

"SHE CAN WATCH IT GROW," EXPLAINED JINNY, "AND TAKING CARE OF IT WILL GIVE HER SOMETHING TO DO."

MRS. MARTIN TOOK THE GIRLS BACK WITH THEIR GIFTS TO CINDY'S HOUSE, WHERE CINDY WRAPPED HER GLASS-BOXED DOLL, AND JINNY PUT GOLD FOIL AROUND THE FLOWER POT.

CINDY'S PARENTS DROVE THEM TO A LARGE FLAT BUILDING OF BRICKS WITH A CARVED WOODEN SIGN IN FRONT THAT READ "GLENNWOOD CONVALESCENT HOME," IN OLD ENGLISH SCRIPT. THICK GREEN SHRUBS WERE TRIMMED INTO A FENCE ALL AROUND THE HOME.

JINNY REMAINED SILENT, WALKING BEHIND CINDY'S PARENTS THROUGH A VERY LONG HALL WITH A CARPET THE COLOR OF THE LINT JINNY TOOK OUT OF THE CARPET SWEEPER.

THERE WAS AN ODOR IN THE AIR THAT TOOK THE STRAWBERRY SCENT FROM JINNY, AND THE HALL WAS LINED UP DOOR AFTER DOOR EXPOSING THREE SMALL BEDS IN EACH ROOM, AND EMPTY EYES OF OLD PEOPLE WATCHING THEM.

"JUNE? JUNE, IS THAT YOU?" CALLED A WOMAN IN A YELLOW FLANNEL GOWN.

CINDY AND HER PARENTS WALKED STRAIGHT AHEAD, NEVER NOTICING THE WOMAN.

"NO," SAID JINNY, "IT ISN'T JUNE."

"SHE'S COMING," SAID THE WOMAN, CROSSING HER ARMS AND WALKING BACK IN THE ROOM, "JUNE'S COMING. I KNOW IT."

CINDY'S GRANDMOTHER WAS SITTING AT A TABLE WITH SIX OTHER BLUE-HAIRED WOMEN. TWO OF THEM WERE WEARING SHAWLS ON THEIR LAPS AND ONE WAS IN A WHEELCHAIR.

"BETTY AND GEORGE," SHE SAID EXCITEDLY, "I'M SO GLAD TO SEE YOU." JINNY WATCHED AS CINDY'S MOTHER PUT HER ARMS AROUND HER MOTHER. HER EYES WERE HARD AND GLINTED DRY, WHILE HER MOTHER'S EYES WELLED UP SOFTLY.

"NOW, DON'T CRY, MOTHER," SHE SAID, "HAPPY BIRTHDAY, CINDY HAS BROUGHT HER FRIEND TO MEET YOU."

CINDY CAME OVER AND PUT HER ARMS AROUND HER GRANDMOTHER WHILE HER MOTHER UNTIED THE STRING ON THE WHITE BAKERY BOX AND TOOK OUT A CAKE.

"DON'T CRY, GRANDMA," SAID CINDY, "THIS IS MY BEST FRIEND, JINNY."

"SUCH LOVELY, LOVELY EYES," SHE SMILED AT JINNY, DABBING AT HER OWN EYES WITH A BLUE LACE HANKIE.

JINNY KISSED HER ON THE CHEEK. "IT'S ALRIGHT TO CRY," SHE WHISPERED.

"WE BROUGHT YOU SOME PRESENTS," SAID CINDY, PUTTING HER GIFT ON HER GRANDMOTHER'S LAP.

"HOW SWEET," SHE SAID, TURNING IT OVER. "I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT IT IS." SHE SLOWLY UNDID THE WRAPPING AND GENTLY REMOVED THE GLASS BOX WITH ITS PINK AND WHITE CONTENTS.

CINDY'S MOM LIT THE CANDLES FORMING A CIRCLE ON THE CAKE WITH A SINGLE PAPER MATCH. "COME ON, MOTHER," SHE SAID, "WE'LL LET THE GIRLS HELP YOU BLOW THEM OUT."

"OH, YES," SHE SAID, HOLDING THE BOX IN HER LAP, "HELP ME, CHILDREN." ALL THREE BLEW AT THE CANDLES UNTIL THEY WERE OUT, AND JINNY PATTED THE GRANDMOTHER ON HER SHOULDER. "SUCH A PRETTY PRETTY DOLL, AND DRESSED IN PINK SATIN."

WHAT DID YOU WISH FOR?" ASKED CINDY.

"I WISHED I COULD GO HOME WITH YOU... AT LEAST FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS -- I HAVEN'T BEEN HOME SINCE CHRISTMAS, AND..."

"NOW, MOTHER, YOU KNOW WE'VE TALKED ABOUT THAT BEFORE... GEORGE AND I BOTH WORK AND THERE WOULDN'T BE ANYONE TO WATCH YOU."

"BUT I DON'T NEED TO BE WATCHED. I HAD A STROKE, BUT I'M FINE NOW... I HAVE BEEN FOR YEARS. I'M WELL. I'D BE GOOD..."

"MOTHER," SAID GEORGE, "TRY TO UNDERSTAND."

SHE BEGAN TO CRY AGAIN, AND REACHED FOR HER BLUE HANKIE, BUT AS SHE SHIFTED IN HER SEAT, THE GLASS BOX FELL OFF HER LAP AND ONTO THE FLOOR WHERE IT SHATTERED AND THE DOLL FELL OUT AMONG THE BROKEN GLASS.

CINDY PICKED IT UP, SMOOTHING ITS PINK DRESS AND PLACED IT ON THE TABLE WHERE THE CRACK IN ITS WHITE FACE WOULDN'T SHOW.

"I'M SORRY," SAID JINNY, HUGGING THE OLD WOMAN. "I'M SO SORRY."

"THERE, THERE, DEAR," SAID THE WOMAN, TRYING NOT TO CRY, "THIS HAPPENS... ALL THE TIME."

"WHY DO YOU HAVE TO STAY HERE?" SOBBED JINNY.

"BECAUSE WE CAN'T GIVE HER THE SAME CARE AT HOME THAT THEY CAN GIVE HER HERE," SAID CINDY'S MOTHER. "YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND, JINNY."

"NO," SAID JINNY QUIETLY, "I DON'T UNDERSTAND AT ALL."

"NOW DON'T CRY, GRANDMA," SAID CINDY, " AND SPOIL THE PARTY." THE OTHER WOMEN AT THE TABLE BEGAN TO CRY AS WELL.

JINNY TURNED AND RAN BACK TOWARDS THE CAR. "JUNE," CALLED A VOICE AT HER BACK -- "JUNE, IS THAT YOU?" JINNY RAN, TRAILING TEARS, THROUGH THE GLASS DOORS AND PAST THE CARVED WOODEN SIGN. SHE OPENED THE CAR DOOR AND CRAWLED INSIDE, HER CHEEKS HOT AND WET... SHE CRAWLED INSIDE HERSELF AND DIDN'T SPEAK WHEN THE OTHERS RETURNED TO THE CAR AND DROVE HER HOME.

TERRY TAFOYA

A SINGLE DAY

"THIS EVACUATION OF THE JAPANESE DURING THE WAR WAS A TERRIBLE THING, A TRAGIC, REGRETTABLE DEED. . ." SAID THE PROFESSOR.

"TRAGIC? REGRETTABLE?"

STRANGE HOW WORDS, LIKE CERTAIN SCENTS OR SENSATIONS, REVIVE MEMORIES. TRAGIC. . . TERRIBLE. . . AND. . . SUDDENLY I WAS BACK TO THAT ARID TERRAIN IN IDAHO.

THE YEAR WAS 1942. THE MONTH WAS THE HOTTEST IN THE YEAR - AUGUST. THE HIT SONG, "AWAY BEYOND THE HILLS OF IDAHO" VIBRATED SOFTLY THROUGH THE STILL MORNING AIR FROM MY PORTABLE RADIO:

AWAY BEYOND THE HILLS OF IDAHO,
WHERE YAWNING CANYONS GREET THE SUN,
AS IT SMILES ABOVE THE TREES OF IDAHO,
TO SAY ANOTHER DAY IS DONE.
WARM SUMMER BREEZE TOSS THE WAVING GRAIN
CALLING ME BACK TO MY HOME AGAIN,
TO DREAM SWEET MEMORIES OF LONG AGO,
BEYOND THE HILLS OF IDAHO.

STANDING AT THE ENTRY OF THE BARRACKS WHICH WAS HOME, I THOUGHT HOW IRONIC THE WORDS WERE. THE SONG WAS A DISTORTION HERE. WE WERE WAY "BEYOND THE HILLS OF IDAHO," - ON THE EASTERN SIDE: WE SAW NOT EVEN THE TRACE OF A HILL ON THE HORIZON. AHEAD AND AROUND US WAS THE PENEPLAIN, AN ARID AREA WITH SPARSE VEGETATION. STRONG DESERT WINDS PLAYED HAVOC WITH THE FINE SAND AS IT SWIRLED WITH SUCH FORCE AGAINST OUR WINDOW THAT THE GLASS WAS POCKED AND OPAQUE. ALTHOUGH IT WAS MORNING, THE SUN'S RAYS APPEARED VERTICAL BECAUSE IT WAS SO FIERCELY HOT. AS USUAL NO CLOUDS DEFLECTED ITS STRENGTH. I GRINNED, RECALLING POSTON AND GILA IN ARIZONA, TWO OTHER EVACUEE CAMPSITES. THE TEMPERATURES THERE SOARED MERCILESSLY TILL THE JAPANESE NICKNAMED THEM CAMPS "ROAST 'EM AND TOAST 'EM." HUMOR, FOR A MINUTE, OVERLAPPED THE PITY FOR MY PEOPLE. THE MESS HALL BREAKFAST GONG INTERRUPTED MY REVERY.

TURNING BACK TO THE ONE ROOM I SHARED WITH MY MOTHER, I LOOKED FOR MY WASH CLOTH AND SOAP. OUR ROOM, WHICH WAS LOCATED AT THE END OF THE BARRACK, WAS AT LEAST CONVENIENTLY CLOSE TO THE LAUNDRY ROOM. WE HAD NO TOILET FACILITIES IN OUR UNITS. THE TWO ARMY COTS AND OUR LITTLE APPLECRATE BOXES SEEMED TO TAKE UP ALL THE SPACE. OUR CLOTHES HUNG ON THE WALLS ALONG WITH A FEW POTS AND PANS. THE TWO MOST CHERISHED POSSESSIONS WERE THE ONE ELEMENT HOT PLATE AND MY RADIO. THE FIRST WE USED CONTINUALLY TO HEAT A KETTLE OF WATER FOR TEA, AND THE SECOND GAVE US INFORMATION OF AN OUTSIDE WORLD, WHICH SOMEHOW WAS REASSURING THOUGH IT HAD REJECTED US. I FOUND THE WASH CLOTH AND SOAP IN

A BASIN UNDER THE COT AND WALKED OUT OF THE BARRACKS ACROSS THE DUSTY DIVIDE TO THE LAUNDRY ROOM.

THE LAUNDRY ROOM WAS SO NAMED BECAUSE THE FRONT PARTITION HAD DEEP DOUBLE SINKS FOR WASHING PURPOSES. WASHBOARDS WERE HUNG ON THE WALLS AND BENCHES RAN ALONG THE SIDES. THE BACK PART HAD THE MEN'S AND WOMEN'S DIVISIONS, IN ADDITION TO THE RESTROOMS AND SHOWERS. I FELT A HAND ON MY SHOULDER AS I DIPPED MY FACE INTO THE COLD WATER.

"HURRY UP, WE'VE GOT ONLY FIVE MORE MINUTES TO GET INTO THE MESS HALL."

I WIPED MY FACE HURRIEDLY, RECOGNIZING MARY'S VOICE. MARY WAS MY DAILY COMPANION - SHORT, PLUMP, FIRM AND PINK. HER FACE WAS ALREADY FLUSHED FROM THE HEAT, BUT HER GOOD-NATURED WHOLESOMENESS WAS CHEERING. SHE EXUDED KINDLINESS AND CONTENTMENT FROM THE MERRY SMALL ANTICLINED EYES TO THE FULL RED LIPS. SHE WAS MY TRANQUILIZER.

MARY'S UNCLE WAS THE DOORKEEPER, AND HE SCOLDED US FOR BEING LATE AS HE LOCKED UP BEHIND US. BLITHELY IGNORING HIM, WE WENT TO THE DISH OUT COUNTER TO PICK UP OUR MILK AND TOAST. THE DAY WOULD FOLLOW THE PATTERN OF ALL THE PRECEDING DAYS. WE WOULD EAT BREAKFAST AND WONDER WHAT TO DO TILL LUNCH. FOLLOWING LUNCH, WE WOULD WONDER WHAT TO DO TILL SUPPER. EATING THEREFORE LOST ITS DELIGHTFULNESS AND BECAME ROUTINE.

"LET'S SEE IF THERE'S A MOVIE TONIGHT," SAID MARY.

I ATE SLOWLY.

"MAYBE IT'S ANOTHER ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MOVIE," SHE WAITED FOR SOME ENCOURAGEMENT FROM ME, "OR THE MERRY MONAHANS."

"IT PROBABLY IS," I SAID IN DISGUST. "THEY MUST THINK IT'S GOOD THERAPY TO KEEP SHOWING US NOTHING BUT COMIC CAPERS. HMPH! "

"IT WOULD BE SOMETHING TO DO," MARY SAID HOPEFULLY.

THE FACT THAT MARY REFUSED TO GO ANYWHERE WITHOUT ME WAS TOUCHING. SHE HAD LIKED ME AND I NEVER SUFFERED THE SENSE OF BEING LOST, WHICH WAS HORRIBLE, ESPECIALLY WHEN ONE HAD SO MUCH IDLE TIME.

"LET'S LOOK IN THE IRRIGATOR," I SAID REACHING FOR THE CAMP NEWSPAPER, WHICH WAS ALWAYS ON THE DINING TABLES. THE DESERT TERRAIN MADE ITS PRESENCE FELT ON THE COLUMN TITLES. "HIGH WINDS" BLEW OVER THE GOSSIP COLUMN. "SAGE BRUSH CANTEEN" HEADED THE HIGH SCHOOL NEWS. BUT THERE WAS NO MOVIE NEWS, AND MARY'S FACE FELL.

WE CLAMBERED OVER THE BENCHES, TOOK OUR DISHES OVER TO THE "SLOPPING" AREA AND STACKED THE DISHES ON OUR WAY OUT. THE HEAT SEEMED TO DOUBLE IN INTENSITY, AND WE WONDERED WHERE TO GO TO GET AWAY FROM IT. MARY'S YOUNGER BROTHER PASSED US WITH A GROUP OF HIS COMPANIONS. THEY WERE EVIDENTLY ON THEIR WAY TO THE CANAL. SWIMMING SUITS AND TOWELS WERE BUNDLED AND TUCKED UNDER EACH ARM. THE CANAL WAS A GOOD MILE NORTH BUT IT OFFERED NO SHADE ALONG ITS BANKS. SAGEBRUSH AND TUMBLEWEED WERE THE ONLY VEGETATION WHICH SURVIVED THERE. RUMOR HAD IT THAT THE SAGEBRUSH WAS INFESTED WITH TICKS WHICH WERE THE CAUSE OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPOTTED FEVER. NEITHER OF US HAD ANY DESIRE TO JOIN THE YOUNGSTERS. WE WALKED ON. LIKE ALL TEENAGE "BEES" WE UNCONSCIOUSLY HEADED FOR OUR "HIVE" WHICH WAS THE BLOCK 14 CANTEEN. HERE WE GATHERED TO VISIT, LOOK THROUGH THE MAIL ORDER CATALOGS AND SIP SOFT DRINKS. THE CANTEEN SOLD SMALL ITEMS OF CLOTHING AND WAS LIMITED IN ITS FOOD SUPPLY. THE PEOPLE DIDN'T OBJECT TO THE SMALL STOCK BECAUSE THEY WERE EVEN MORE LIMITED IN FUNDS, BEING UNABLE TO EARN OVER THE SET WAGE OF $16.00 A MONTH. ONE WAS LUCKY EVEN TO HAVE A JOB IN CAMP. MOST OF US HAD TO DIG IN TO OUR SAVINGS WHICH WERE MEAGER AFTER OUR FAST EJECTION FROM THE COAST.

MARY AND I HAD FINALLY SETTLED OURSELVES AFTER AN HOUR'S CHAT WHEN IN BURST A MAN OF PERHAPS SIXTY ODD YEARS. HE WORE A FRAYED WHITE SHIRT OVER FADED BLUE TROUSERS, WHICH WERE PULLED UP BY HIS BLACK SUSPENDERS DISPLAYING HIS THIN LEGS.

"A BOY'S DROWNED IN THE CANAL!" HIS EXCITED STACCATO VOICE ROSE HIGHER AND HIGHER. THE GROUP STARED WITH AWE, STARTLED BY HIS SUDDEN APPEARANCE. HE BLINKED RAPIDLY WHILE HE TRIED TO FOCUS HIS DILATED PUPILS TO THE DARKENED INTERIOR OF THE CANTEEN.

"SOMEONE SHOULD GO OUT THERE, THEY MAY NEED HELP," HE SAID. (SENSING EXCITEMENT), THE GROUP LEAPED TO THEIR FEET AND RACED NORTH TOWARDS THE CANAL ROAD.

MARY STOPPED SHORT AND RAN BACK TO THE CANTEEN.

"WHAT'S THE BOY'S NAME?" SHE ASKED.

THE STOOPED OLD MAN HESITANTLY RAN HIS FINGERS THROUGH HIS WISPY HAIR.

"WAS IT TADA?" MARY INQUIRED ANXIOUSLY.

"SOMETHING LIKE THAT -- YES, IT WAS SOMETHING LIKE THAT."

MARY'S EYES WIDENED WITH FEAR. TADA WAS HER YOUNGER BROTHER.

WE RAN NOW, UNMINDFUL TO THE DUST, THE HEAT, AND THE TICK INFESTED SAGE BRUSH. MARY SOBBED CONTINUALLY -- TEARING, INDRAWN, QUIET SOBS WHICH UNNERVED ME COMPLETELY. SHE WAS USUALLY SUCH A SANGUINE PERSON: I WONDERED WHAT TO SAY TO HER. I COULDN'T THINK OF A THING TO SAY. SO TO COVER MY INADEQUACY, I RAN A LITTLE AHEAD OF HER. THE LONG DISTANCE AND THE HEAT FINALLY GOT THE BETTER OF US, AND WE SETTLED DOWN TO A SLOWER PACE. COUGHING AND CHOCKING BECAUSE THE HEAT HAD PARCHED OUR THROATS AND BECAUSE THE FINE DUST HAD IRRITATED OUR NOSES, WE SLOWED OUR PACE EVEN

MORE. BECAUSE THE GROUND WAS FLAT, WE COULD SEE THE CROWD OF PEOPLE LINING THE CANAL BANK. FEAR SEEPED INTO ME AS I SAW A LITTLE TO THE RIGHT OF THE GROUP, SOMEONE KNEELING OVER A STILL FORM. SPRINTING, OBLIVIOUS OF MARY, I EASILY LEFT HER BEHIND IN THE LAST HALF MILE.

SOMEONE WAS PUSHING THE CROWD BACK, BUT I MADE SWEEPING MOTIONS WITH MY ARMS TO GET THROUGH. I TRIED TO GET A GOOD LOOK AT THE LAD, BUT SOMEONE PLUCKED MY SLEEVE REPEATEDLY. ANNOYED I TRIED TO JAB HIM OFF WITH MY ELBOW, BUT THE PULLING PERSISTED. I TURNED AND STARED DUMBFOUNDED AT TADA,

"WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE?" HE SAID.

MARY, WHO HAD REACHED US NOW, JUST STARED AT HER BROTHER. RELIEF CAUSED HER TO GRAB HIM ROUGHLY, AS IF THE PHYSICAL HOLD WOULD RELEASE HER TENSION.

"GO HOME!" SHE ORDERED, HIDING HER FEELINGS BEHIND HER PINK, PLUMP FACE.

I TURNED TO LOOK AT THE STILL LIFELESS FORM OF THE DROWNED LAD. HE WAS ABOUT SEVEN OR EIGHT YEARS OLD. IN A SUDDEN BURST OF RECOGNITION, I YELLED AT MARY, "THIS IS TADA, NOT YOUR TADA, BUT THAT BOY UP IN BLOCK 40." MOTHER KNEW THE FOLKS WELL. I WONDERED WHERE THEY WERE.

THE RESCUERS HAD GIVEN UP ARTIFICIAL RESPIRATION, AND THE MAN ADMINISTERING IT LIFTED THE LAD UP TENDERLY AND GAVE US A LOOK. THE LAD'S HAIR WAS CURLY AND THE WATER STILL DRIPPED FROM HIS HEAD. (HE LOOKED SO PEACEFUL IN DEATH: I WONDERED WHAT TERROR HE HAD SEEN BEFORE DYING.) THE CANAL WAS KNOWN TO BE SWIFT AND TREACHEROUS, BUT THE HEAT MADE IT SO INVITING, ESPECIALLY TO THE YOUNG.

SOMEHOW AS I STOOD THERE, I THOUGHT OF THE SHORTNESS OF THIS LAD'S LIFE. WHAT HAD HE ACCOMPLISHED IN HIS SPAN? WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF HIS BRIEF YEARS ON EARTH? (I WONDERED ABOUT LIFE AND DEATH.) BENET'S LINES CAME TO ME. . ."TEACH ME TO KNOW YOUR WILL, TEACH ME TO READ YOUR DIFFICULT PURPOSE HERE, WHICH MUST BE PLAIN IF I HAD EYES TO SEE IT." --- THE THING BEHIND THE WORDS -- IT WAS HARD, SO HARD TO FIND! I KICKED AT THE CEREAL-COLORED SAND AND REMEMBERED WE HAD MISSED LUNCH! THOROUGHLY DISGUSTED AT THE THOUGHT, WE DECIDED TO STOP AT THE CANTEEN AND SIP COKES TILL THE DINNER GONG SOUNDED.

THE DINING HALL TALK WAS ABOUT THE DROWNING. WHISPERING, THE OLDER GENERATION STARTED TO TALK ABOUT THE "HE-NO-TAMA." THIS WAS A BELIEF ABOUT THE SOUL OF DEAD, AND FOR US TO QUESTION IT WOULD HAVE BEEN OF NO USE. THEY CLAIMED THAT TONIGHT THE SOUL OF THIS LAD WOULD GO WANDERING ABOUT THE DESERT. MANY HAD CLAIMED TO HAVE SEEN THIS "SPIRIT OF THE DEAD" IN THE FORM OF A FIREBALL WHICH GLOWED IN EXOTIC COLORS AND RACED ABOUT THE ARID TERRAIN. IT WAS EVEN RUMORED THAT IT HAD ENTERED ONE LAUNDRY ROOM AND WHIRLED ABOUT BEFORE DASHING INTO THE NIGHT AFTER MR. ABE DIED.

MR. ABE, AS I HEARD IT, HAD WANDERED OUT ON THE DESERT IN SEARCH OF GREASEWOOD TO BURN. DAYS IN MINIDOKA WERE HOT, BUT WHAT IS NOT GENERALLY KNOWN IS THAT THE NIGHTS ON A DESERT ARE EXTREMELY COLD. HE WENT FOR WOOD TO BURN IN HIS LITTLE POT-BELLIED STOVE IN HIS ROOM AND BECAME LOST. FOUND THREE DAYS LATER, HE WAS BURNED BLACK AND FROZEN STIFF. THE SEARCH PARTY VOMITED AT THE SIGHT OF HIM AND WE STILL RECALLED THEIR STORIES WITH HORROR. NEEDLESS TO SAY, NO GUARDS WERE NEEDED TO KEEP US WITHIN OUR CAMPS: NO ONE DARED VENTURE TOO FAR OUT. DECIDING TO LOOK AROUND FOR THIS FIRE-BALL AFTER SUPPER, MARY AND I WENT TO THE LAUNDRY ROOM WHERE THE FIRST FIRE-BALL WAS SEEN. WE TOOK ALONG OUR PORTABLE RADIO AND OUR KNITTING TO OCCUPY US. THE OLDER MEN WERE PLAYING "GOH" WHICH IS SIMILAR TO CHESS. A CONTINUAL STREAM OF PEOPLE, ALL SHAPES AND SIZES AND AGES, CAME THROUGH TO WASH BEFORE DARK. THE CLATTER OF THEIR "GETA'S" WAS DISTURBING. GETA'S, WOODEN STILTED FOOTGEAR WHICH SERVED A DUAL ROLE FOR THE PEOPLE, KEPT ONE OFF THE DUSTY ROAD AND ALSO PROTECTED ONE FROM CATCHING FOOT DISEASES IN THE COMMUNITY SHOWERS. TEN O'CLOCK CAME AND WITH IT THE BLOCK MANAGER, WHO ORDERED EVERYONE OUT AS HE DOUSED THE LIGHTS. WE SAW NOTHING.

MARY AND I PARTED. "SEE YOU TOMORROW," WE SIGHED. I ENTERED MY BARRACKS QUIETLY, THINKING MY MOTHER WAS ASLEEP: BUT SHE WAS WAITING UP FOR ME WITH THE USUAL CUP OF HOT TEA. I RELATED THE EVENTS OF THE DAY AND THEN UNDRESSED TO CRAWL UNDER THE HEAVY OLIVE DRAB U.S. ARMY BLANKETS.

OUTSIDE THE NIGHT WINDS BEGAN TO BLOW, THE FINE SAND AGAINST THE PANES, AND THE GRITTY, PINGING NOISE LULLED ME TO SLEEP.

SHARON ABURANO